



Section 8 & You

Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach

Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity

Dear Family,

It's the beginning of the new year and I want to take this opportunity to report on some of the Housing Authority's accomplishments during this past year, and to let you see into our future a bit. I don't know how much of our internal workings are of interest to you, but the better prepared we are to do our job, the better our clients and landlords are served.

- ✓ Our lease-up rate exceeded 100% for most of the year, only coming down when we received the additional 537 new vouchers from HUD.
- ✓ We received a grant for \$240,000 to be used for Family Self Sufficiency Program coordinators. We are recruiting for three additional staffers at this time.
- ✓ We will be receiving \$90,000 for HOPWA (Housing for People with Aids) caseworkers that we will funnel back to the Health Department. The Health Department will provide recruitment services for the Housing Authority.
- ✓ Our caseworkers received a much-deserved raise, literally giving more value to their work, which of course provides incentive to perform.
- ✓ Construction has begun on our rest room, meaning that guests will not have to be escorted through our work area. Construction should be finalized in about six weeks.
- ✓ We have quite a few additional staff aboard, meaning that desks can be covered in absences. We still haven't reduced caseloads, but that should be coming.
- ✓ The conversion of old contracts to new Housing Choice Voucher Contracts is just about completely behind us (thank goodness).
- ✓ The fraud program had its first conviction, and a second participant is awaiting trial.
- ✓ The waiting room has a sound-insulated ceiling.
- ✓ Our presentation materials are helping to



Housing Authority staff wishes you a Happy New Year.

(Continued on page 2)

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Questions & Answers?

Write to: Darnisa Tyler



City of Long Beach Housing Authority
521 E. 4th St., Long Beach, CA 90802

"This information is available in an alternative format by request to Cindy Acero at 562-570-6019."

create a positive image for the Housing Authority in the community.

Some of the issues we are working on:

- There is quite a bit of training in our future
 - Our caseworkers will soon begin cross training in the inspection process, which should lead to greater flexibility in assigning staff.
 - Caseworkers will also be given extensive additional training on eligibility and rent calculation.
- We will soon have a new windows-based software system in place.
- We will soon also have a document imaging system in place. (We hope to go paperless sometime in the not-too-distant future.)
- We plan to initiate a newly authorized home ownership program for qualified Section 8 families.
- We plan to soon contract with a firm to assist our applicants locate homes and to provide counseling services relating to their rentability.

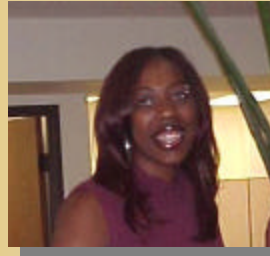
You can see that we are continually seeking to improve ourselves. I hope the effort shows itself as we work to serve you.

Hope your new year is bright and prosperous.

Sincerely,


Lawrence D. Triesch
Deputy Executive Director

New Faces at the Housing Authority



Eboni Bryant
Housing Specialist



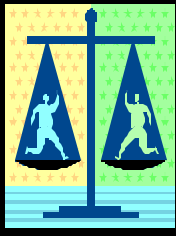
Claudia Escobedo
Housing Specialist



Debbie Bravo
Housing Specialist



Nelly Chavez
Administrative Clerk



KNOW YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS:

By Susanne Browne
Staff Attorney
Legal Aid Foundation

We congratulate you for your success in getting onto the Section 8 Program. Section 8 is a huge asset to you. Your voucher is worth a tremendous amount of money, especially in today's tight housing market. Every day, we see people at Legal Aid who are being evicted because they cannot afford their rent.

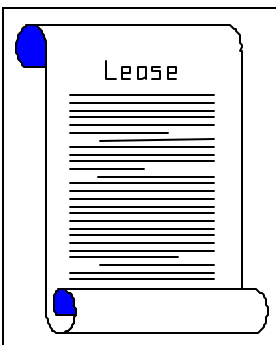
DON'T RISK BEING EVICTED AND LOSING YOUR VOUCHER...

As long as you have your Section 8 voucher, your rent will be somewhere between 30 and 40% of your income. You are extremely fortunate to have this benefit and we want to do everything in our power to help you keep your voucher.



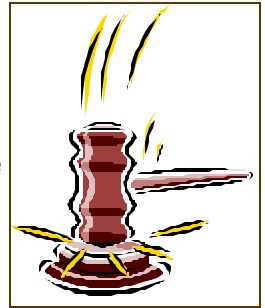
READ AND UNDERSTAND YOUR LEASE...

Every day, our office helps Section 8 voucher holders who have either made mistakes, broken the rules or violated their lease. Usually our clients do not realize that they are breaking the rules. It is very important that you read and understand the program rules and your lease agreement. The program rules were given to you at your Section 8 briefing (the meeting where the Housing Authority gave you your voucher).



NEW LAW GIVES SECTION 8 TENANTS NEW PROTECTIONS

On January 1, 2001, a new law was passed that requires Section 8 landlords to give Section 8 tenants **90 days notice** that they have to move out.



Before this law went into effect, Section 8 landlords were only required to give tenants 30 days notice that they had to move out. If you receive a 30 Day Notice from your Section 8 landlord, it may be invalid and Legal Aid suggests that you immediately contact Roger Contreras at Legal Aid for help. Roger Contreras can be reached at (213) 385-1719.

If you have already received an eviction notice from the court (an Unlawful Detainer Complaint) and you would like assistance from Legal Aid, you should call us at (213) 487-7609.

Useful information to tenants provided by the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles.

Prescription Drug Company Pfizer Offers Low-Income Card

Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer is offering low-income senior citizens some of its widely used prescriptions for \$15 each a month. Included are drugs for lowering cholesterol, blood pressure and treating depression. The program begins March 1.

To qualify seniors must be enrolled in Medicare and have an annual gross income below \$18,000, or less than \$24,000 for couples. Recipients can have no other prescription drug coverage. Those applying will have to provide proof of income. CVS and Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. have agreed to participate.

Card applications are available by calling 1-800-717-6005 or on the Web at <http://www.pfizerforliving.com>.

KEEPING YOUR SECTION 8 RENTAL ASSISTANCE

by Linda Bevins, Housing Coordinator

We would like to share some information with you that may help you avoid the mistakes other participants made last year.

During the past year sixty families went through the Informal Hearing process. The most common violations were – unreported income (often combined with an unauthorized person), missed appointments, and drug related activity. Thirty-five of the families lost their assistance, and missing appointments was the most common reason.



Why Is It Important to Keep Appointments?

Missing scheduled office appointments or unit inspections is serious, because it can cost a family their Section 8 rental assistance.

What Counts As A Missed Appointment?

- You arrive late, and can't be seen by your specialist - it counts as a missed appointment.
- You call and reschedule – it counts as a missed appointment (unless medical or a work requirement verification is provided).
- You miss the inspector at your unit inspection – it counts as a missed appointment.
- You refuse to allow an inspector to inspect your unit – it counts as a missed appointment.
- You are uncooperative, and your interview is terminated – it counts as a missed appointment.

I Only Missed One Appointment This Year – Why Count What I Missed Last Year?

This is a very important point to understand. The Housing Authority looks at the last 12-month period. This means that each time you miss an appointment, we are required to look at the last 12 months. If you have missed other appointments in the last 12 months, they

are all counted, even if that goes back into another year.

I Only Missed Two Inspections – Why Send Me A Notice of Intended Action?

Missing two inspections automatically causes the unit to fail HQS, and stops the owner's rent payment. You may not miss two inspections.

OTHER TIPS

- Do not allow anyone, who is not an authorized resident, to use your address for receiving any mail, or for parole/probation purposes. (It is difficult to prove someone does not live with you when they are reporting that they do).
- Do not allow unauthorized persons to reside in your unit.
- Report all changes of income in writing within 30 days.

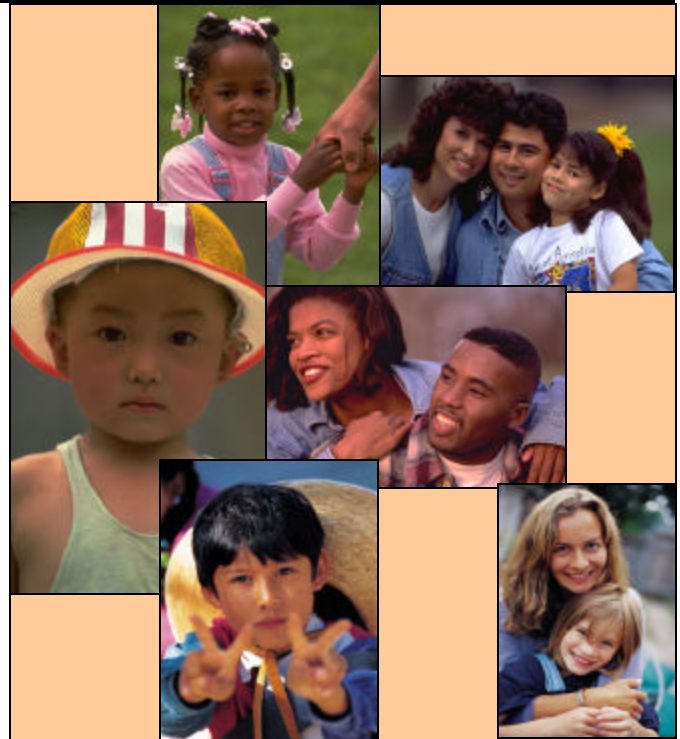
If you know of a drug-related problem in your household, contact your specialist before the person gets in trouble. Your specialist may be able to help you protect your rental assistance by excluding the person, or providing a referral resource.

CREATING A HEALTHY LIVING ENVIRONMENT...

People spend up to ninety percent of their time indoors. The indoor environment is not usually considered a cause of illness and disease; however, allergies, asthma, headaches, eye and respiratory irritations, are often linked to exposure to indoor pollutants. These pollutants include house dust, droppings from rats and roaches, mold and mildew, and animal "dander" (tiny scales of animal skin).

The following can help you reduce indoor household pollutants:

- ♦ Animal "dander" or dandruff can cause asthma and allergy attacks. Wash and brush pets frequently, keep them outdoors as much as possible and do not let them sleep in the bedroom.
- ♦ "Spores" found in mold and mildew can travel through the air and cause breathing problems. Avoid growth of mold and mildew by:
 - ✓ Using exhaust fans or opening the windows in the kitchen and bathrooms when showering, cooking or using the dishwasher.
 - ✓ Preventing the growth of mildew in bathrooms and other damp areas (such as refrigerator drip pans) by wiping regularly with vinegar and water.
 - ✓ Washing mold off hard surfaces and drying the surface completely. Absorbent materials with mold growth, such as ceiling tiles and carpet, may need to be replaced.
- ♦ House dust is used as "food" by tiny bugs called dust mites. Frequent vacuuming will keep dust and dirt from building up on floors and carpets. Dusting with a damp cloth after you vacuum will help eliminate dust generated by the vacuum cleaner.
- ♦ Rodents and insects are attracted to trash and garbage. To eliminate trash build-up:



- ✓ Deposit trash and garbage into a covered trashcan or dumpster every day.
- ✓ Rinse all recyclables and store outside. Recycle at least once a week.
- ♦ Do not leave dirty dishes or open food out overnight.

If you have a housing problem that requires repair or corrective action, notify the property manager or owner as soon as possible. Don't wait until the problem becomes serious.

We are pleased to announce that the Housing Authority will be offering a Homeownership Program for qualified Section 8 families. Stay tuned for details.



SECTION 8 TENANT CONVICTED IN \$9000 HOUSING-FRAUD

Vice Mayor Dan Baker, Chairman of the Housing Authority Commissioners Board of Directors, announced that a Section 8 tenant had been convicted of stealing a total of nearly \$9,000 in government housing subsidies. The investigation focused on people who lied about their employment or household income and thereby fraudulently received subsidized housing benefits from the Long Beach Housing Authority.

The Vice Mayor stated, "The message this conviction sends and others would be wise to learn is that, with so many needy families on long waiting lists for affordable housing, the City will not be duped into providing subsidized apartments to people who can well afford to pay more or even live elsewhere."

The Housing Authority receives most tips on suspected fraud via the hotline. A thorough investigation of the allegations is undertaken and, once concluded, participants who have committed fraud are:

- terminated from the program;
- required to make restitution to the Housing Authority; and
- criminally prosecuted, if warranted.

According to the City Manager, Henry Taboada, "This conviction is part of ongoing investigations by the Housing Authority of participants who are abusing the program by concealing their income and assets from the agency." He expects that there will be more convictions soon.

Lawrence Triesch, Housing Authority Bureau Manager, said, "while most participants are



good people who abide by the rules, we know that there are those who abuse the program. Because the need for housing assistance is so great, and there are so many people who need the program, we are taking all steps to reduce instances of fraud."

The Section 8 recipient, Tasha Poindexter Penniman, was charged with concealing income from the Long Beach Housing Authority, between February 1999 and January 2001. She provided false information regarding her employment status, income and assets in order to fraudulently obtain housing benefits. She was convicted of a felony offense, and ordered to pay restitution of \$8,718.68 to the Long Beach Housing Authority. In addition, she will perform 250 hours of community service.

The Housing Authority's Fraud Investigation Unit conducted the investigation. The Office of Los Angeles District Attorney Steve L. Cooley prosecuted the case. Deputy District Attorney Tom Winke handled the matter.

*To report suspected fraud or program abuse
please call our fraud hotline at
(562) 570-6985 and press 5.*

Programs, Services, etc...



Free Refrigerators From Southern California Edison...

If you are participant of the Section 8 program with the Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach, have a Southern California Edison account, and have a refrigerator at least 10 years old, you may qualify for Edison's **no cost** Refrigerator Replacement Program. You may qualify for this program even if you don't own the refrigerator in your unit, but you are responsible for the electric bill (you pay the bill from Edison).

To be eligible, you must meet the following income guidelines.

| People in household | Maximum Income | 60 years or older/disable |
|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1-2 | \$22,000 | \$25,200 |
| 3 | \$25,900 | \$29,600 |
| 4 | \$31,100 | \$35,600 |
| Each addl person | \$ 5,200 | \$ 6,000 |

If you meet the above requirements, there is a good chance you will qualify for the program. If you are interested, please contact a Family Self-Sufficiency representative immediately. They may be contacted at the following numbers:

Paula Hackett-Palmer (562) 570-5359
Rose Usher (562) 570-6025
Elise Smith (562) 570-7191

At your request, we will forward your financial and household information to Edison in order for them to put you on a reservation list. Edison will contact you to make an appointment for an inspection to confirm your eligibility.

Remember this is a no cost refrigerator replacement program. Funding is limited and requests are filled on a first-come first-served basis.

Other Services...

The Long Beach Health Dept. maintains birth and death records for the current and previous year only. For records prior to these years, contact the Los Angeles County Recorder's Office at (562) 462-2137.

Birth Records (562) 570-4305
 Death Records (562) 570-4303

The Career Transition Center (CTC) is a one-stop shop for job training, and education seekers customers. Services include re-employment assistance, retraining, supportive services and workshops.

CTC (562) 570-3700

The Neighborhood Services Bureau can help you obtain the name and address of a property owner.

Property Ownership (562) 570-6066

Are you having a dispute with a merchant, landlord, neighbor, employer, insurance company, roommate, spouse or other person? Dispute Resolution Services (DRS) offers fast, confidential and effective mediation to help you resolve disputes.

DRS (562) 570-1019

Barking dogs, dangerous or injured animals

Animal Control (562) 570-7387

Loud music, amplified sound, car stereos, car alarms, leaf blowers, all qualify as noise disturbances. File a complaint with the City's:

Noise Abatement Officer (562) 570-4126

Gang prevention and intervention (562) 570-1069

Property maintenance
 Abandoned vehicles or furniture (562) 570-6421

Section 8 Housing Ombudsman (562) 570-6089



City of Long Beach
Housing Authority
521 E. 4th Street
Long Beach, Ca 90802

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Section 8 & You

Free Legal Help Online!



www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp



Free help is now available on the Internet for the estimated 4.3 million Californians who act as their own lawyers in court each year.

In August 2001, the State court system opened its new California Courts online Self-Help Center, the most comprehensive resource ever assembled on California court information.

The online center is part of the official Web site of the California courts and can be found at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp.

The Web site includes more than 900 pages of resources and links for legal assistance and covers the areas where information is most needed by people who represent themselves, including divorce, domestic violence, child custody and support, traffic and small claims.

Also available are descriptions of court procedures, court forms and information on how to find free and low-cost legal help. Court spokeswoman Lynn Holton

said that more than half of the Californians who find themselves in court don't have a lawyer. She said that the new site doesn't encourage people to represent themselves, but offers step-by-step assistance to those who do.

The Judicial Council of California, which is the governing body of the California court system, has made improved public access a top priority of the judicial branch, Holton said.